Tracing national traditions transnationally

Michael Wood

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A.W. Schlegel, Walter Scott, and Two Takes on Theatre History

In 1819, Walter Scott's "Essay on the Drama" appeared in the ongoing supplement to the fourth, fifth, and sixth editions of the *Encyclopædia Britannica* (1815–24). The "Essay on the Drama" is a wide-ranging historical survey of drama and performance in Europe from the days before Aeschylus in ancient Greece to the present state of play on the British stage. Between these two poles, Scott considers theatre in Rome and Byzantium, before stopping in at medieval mystery plays, French neoclassicism, Italian opera, Spanish tragedy, the English renaissance, and drama from the Restoration through the Augustan Age. Running to a total of 178 pages in the 1834–36 edition of Scott's *Miscellaneous Prose Works*,[1] the "Essay on the Drama" represents Scott's most significant, lengthy, and wide-ranging piece of dramatic criticism – with the obvious exception of his 453-page *Life of Dryden* from 1808, which, however, also devotes itself to other aspects of Dryden's biography beyond his dramatic works. In an essay about the development of dramatic genres and performance styles across times, cultures, and nations, Scott's account is international and, at times, he nods towards the benefits of intercultural cross-fertilisation in developing national dramatic traditions: drama, for Scott, does not develop in isolation, but moves between cultures, changing as it does so. His own account of the role of German drama in British theatrical renewal is a case in point. When he looks back on the state of the British stage in the 1790s, he maintains in hindsight, that

> a new impulse from some other quarter – a fresh turning up of the soil, and awakening of its latent energies by a new mode of culture, was become absolutely necessary to the renovation of our dramatic literature. England was destined to receive this impulse from Germany, where literature was in the first luxuriant glow of vegetation, with all its crop of flowers and weeds rushing up together. There was good and evil in the importation derived from this superabundant source. But the evil was of a nature so contrary to that which had long palsied our dramatic literature, that, like the hot poison mingling with the cold, it may in the issue bring us nearer to a state of health.[2]

1 See Walter Scott, "Essay on the Drama," in *The Miscellaneous Prose Works of Sir Walter Scott, Bart.*, 28 vols. (Edinburgh: Cadell, 1834–36), vol. 6, pp. 217–395.

2 Scott, "Essay on the Drama," pp. 380f.

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Here we find Scott casting a backwards glance on precisely that moment when British translators and adaptors were in a frenzy of excitement bringing German and German-inspired plays to enthusiastic audiences and readers. The 1790s is also the point at which, amongst other things, Matthew Gregory Lewis visited Weimar and learned German, Samuel Taylor Coleridge undertook a life-changing trip to Göttingen, and when Scott himself translated a handful of German plays and turned his hand to writing a play of his own, *The House of Aspen* in 1799–1800.[3] In Scott's account, looking to a foreign dramatic tradition was required to lift British drama out of its stagnation, no matter how good or bad these foreign imports may have been. And Scott himself appears to have been a beneficiary of this "new impulse" from "a new mode of culture."

Not only is Scott's essay notable for exploring and championing intercultural exchange; it is also the outcome of this same exchange. The "Essay on the Drama" is hugely indebted to August Wilhelm Schlegel's *Vorlesungen über dramatische Kunst und Litteratur*, a series of lectures held in Vienna in 1808 and subsequently published in three volumes over 1809–11. Schlegel's fifteen lectures had given a historical survey of European drama and performance from pre-Socratic Greece to contemporary Germany. And, as in Scott's essay, Schlegel's international lens brought a transnational dimension to his endeavour: as we shall see, Schlegel too charts movements between cultures as well as holding traditions apart for comparison. Scott owned a copy of Schlegel's lectures in John Black's 1815 English translation, which is still held in his collection at Abbotsford. This copy of Black's translation contains no marginalia or other form of comments,[4] but Scott had certainly read Schlegel's lectures by 19 April 1817; writing to his close friend, the actor Daniel Terry, he asks: "Have you read Schlegel on the Drama? There are good things in it though he is something too dogmatical. I have taken a few lessons from him."[5] In the context of this letter in April 1817, Scott is

3 For a detailed assessment of Scott's reception of German drama in the late 1790s, see Michael Wood, "On Form and Feeling: German Drama and the Young Walter Scott," *German Life and Letters* 71, no. 4 (2018): 395–414. And for a discussion of Scott's House of Aspen in the context of his response to German drama at the time, see Michael Wood, "Of German Genres and Scottish Sentiments: Henry Mackenzie, Walter Scott, and the Schauspiel," in *Anglo-German Dramatic and Poetic Encounters: Perspectives on Exchange in the Sattelzeit*, eds. Michael Wood and Sandro Jung (Bethlehem, PA: Lehigh University Press, 2019), pp. 69–94, here pp. 81–89.

4 It is not uncommon for books in Scott's possession that he had definitely read and studied at length to contain no form of annotation. His editions of the German plays from which he had translated in 1796–98, for example, are clean and entirely unmarked.

5 Walter Scott to Daniel Terry, Abbotsford, 19 April 1817, in *The Letters of Sir Walter Scott*, ed. Herbert Grierson, 12 vols. (London: Constable, 1932–37), vol. 4, pp. 435–39, here p. 438.

specifically addressing the lessons learned from Schlegel for the purposes of writing his own play, *The Doom of Devorgoil*, which seems to follow Schlegel's lead insofar as it dispenses with conventional generic criteria and depicts a (fictional) subject from Scottish history; but it departs from Schlegel's teachings in Scott's outright rejection of portraying the supernatural on stage. The details of *The Doom of Devorgoil* are not to be discussed further here, but what is significant is that Scott attests to limits to his acceptance of Schlegel's dramatic theory. This comment from April 1817 therefore lends a useful point of departure for an analysis of Scott's "Essay on the Drama," written just over a year later at some point between August and November 1818.[6]

In the following, I want to look at the relationship between Scott's "Essay on the Drama" and Schlegel's *Vorlesungen*. As Thomas Sauer writes, Schlegel's drama lectures "altered the way in which the English thought and wrote about Shakespeare";[7] and by 1819 Schlegel was perhaps best known in Britain as a major source for Coleridge's Shakespeare lectures from 1811–12 and 1818–19 – so major, in fact, that Coleridge has stood accused of plagiarising "[w]ords, phrases, and entire passages" from Schlegel.[8] For Scott the lessons from Schlegel went far beyond Shakespeare, whose work Scott knew well enough not to have to borrow from another source, even though some of Scott's remarks on Shakespeare bear more than a passing resemblance to those Schlegel. But the two part company in a subtle, yet significant way that is telling with regard to how Scott views both drama and the role of intercultural exchange. When scholars – albeit very infrequently – look to Scott's relationship with drama and his own dramatic criticism, the "Essay on the Drama" tends to be cast aside in favour of his 1808 *Life of Dryden*. His biography of Dryden is curiously seen as Scott's last word on drama – even though he went on to write further pieces on actor-manager John Philip Kemble, playwright John Home, and Molière, in 1826, 1827, and 1828 respectively. Margaret Ball, for example, claims that "[a]lthough the Essay was written ten years later than the *Dryden*, we have no reason to think that Scott changed his

6 For this window of probability, compare, for example, the following: Walter Scott to MacVey Napier, Drumlanrig Castle, 7 August 1818, in *Letters*, vol. 5, pp. 175–76, here p. 175; and Walter Scott to Duke of Buccleuch, Edinburgh, 20 November 1818, in *Letters*, vol. 5, pp. 221–24, here p. 223.

7 Thomas G. Sauer, *A.W. Schlegel's Shakespeare Criticism in England, 1811–1846* (Bonn: Bouvier, 1981), p. 146.

8 For a thorough treatment and partial refutation of this accusation, see Frederick Burwick, "Greek Drama: Coleridge, De Quincey, A.W. Schlegel," *The Wordsworth Circle* 44, no. 1 (2013): 3–12.

views or added greatly to his knowledge in the interval."[9] As we shall see, this assertion overlooks even the basic historical insights Scott gained from reading Schlegel. William Gordon Dustan's lengthy PhD thesis on the subject of "Walter Scott and the Drama" sees the "Essay on the Drama" as little more than "hack-work" and therefore dedicates only cursory comments to it.[10] Yet the "Essay on the Drama" is much more than this. Along with the likes of Coleridge, Lewis, Henry Crabb Robinson, and Thomas Carlyle, at a number of points in his career Scott was at the forefront of the reception of German literature and thought in Britain; and his literary production stood to gain a good deal from this reception.[11] The "Essay" presents a very clear case of Scott interacting with the cutting edge of German Romantic criticism. Indeed, when we focus on aspects of transnationalism and interculturalism and the form and function of historiography in Scott's essay and Schlegel's lectures, we gain insights not only into Scott's reception of German drama and dramatic criticism, but also into the limits of Scott's participation in the intellectual and philosophical developments underwriting the works of those he admired, ultimately setting him far apart from figures like Coleridge and Carlyle. Moreover, in studying Schlegel's *Vorlesungen* through this comparative lens, I hope to present a partial reappraisal of a work that, though occupying an important place in the German history of ideas, has, with a few notable exceptions, tended not to be the focus of scholarship over the years. As it turns out, the treatment of nation and foreignness in Schlegel's lectures curiously

9 Margaret Ball, *Sir Walter Scott as a Critic of Literature* (New York: Mount Holyoke College, 1907), p. 52f.

10 William Gordon Dustan, *Sir Walter Scott and the Drama* (PhD Diss., University of Edinburgh, 1933), p. 190.

11 The question of whether Scott gained anything from his interest in German literature and, if so, what, has been in circulation for some time and resulted in a large volume of research over the years, most notably Goerg Lukács's findings in *The Historical Novel* that emphasise the importance of Scott reading of Götz von Berlichingen in his literary progress. Alongside this, see also: William Macintosh, *Scott and Goethe: German Influence on the Writings of Sir Walter Scott* (Galashiels, A. Walker & Son, [1925]); G.H. Needler, *Goethe and Scott* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1950); Paul M. Ochojski, "Sir Walter Scott's Continuous Interest in Germany," *Studies in Scottish Literature* 3, no. 3 (1966): 164–73; Paul M. Ochojski, *Walter Scott and Germany: A Study in Literary Cross-Currents* (PhD diss., Columbia University, 1960); and Frank W. Stokoe, *German Influence in the English Romantic Period 1788–1818, with special reference to Scott, Coleridge, Shelley and Byron* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1926). For some recent publications on Scott's reception of German literature and their lasting impression on Scott's own creative output, see, for example, Christopher Johnson, "Scott and the German Historical Drama," *Archiv für das Studium der neueren Sprachen und Literaturen* 233, no. 1 (1996): 20–36; Frauke Reitemeier, *Deutsch-englische Literaturbeziehungen: Der historische Roman Sir Walter Scotts und seine deutschen Vorläufer* (Paderborn: Schöningh, 2001); and Wood, "On Form and Feeling."

places him at greater intellectual proximity to Johann Gottlieb Fichte than to his brother, Friedrich Schlegel.[12]

1 Theatre Histories at a Glance

Before discussing what Scott took from Schlegel, it is worth outlining Schlegel's procedure in some detail. At a glance, Schlegel's fifteen lectures present a potted history of drama and performance from the beginnings of theatre in the rituals of pre-Socratic Greece to his present day. He moves through the development of Greek tragedy in Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides, before turning to Greek comedy, then studies the importation of Greek forms into Rome. After this, his attention moves briefly to Italy before neoclassical French tragedy and comedy; then on to England and Spain before focusing on Germany in the final lecture. Perhaps unsurprisingly, as a world-leading philologist Schlegel devotes the entirety of lectures three to seven to Ancient Greece alone; and he keenly demonstrates his knowledge of Shakespeare: he discusses Shakespeare in the twelfth lecture, which, in the process of being "ganz neu ausgearbeitet" for publication in the third volume of the lectures in 1811, ends up extended to the equivalent of three lectures in length.[13] He also gives over three lectures to a critique of French neoclassicism.

Schlegel begins by asserting that drama is specific to certain cultures. He finds no reference to drama in Egyptian culture in accounts by Herodotus or others, yet the Etruscans – "sonst in vielem den Aegyptiern so ähnlich"[14] – had theatrical performances. No matter the similarities between cultures in other respects, not all developed drama. Much the same can be said for cultures and nations separated by greater distances, both culturally and geographically. Like Greece and Etruria, Indian and Chinese civilisations had their own national dramatic traditions long ago, despite the alleged lack of such forms in Persia and the Arabian Peninsula.[15] While all of mankind is linked by having "eine große Anlage

12 For the avoidance of confusion, where this article talks of "Schlegel," it is referring to August Wilhelm Schlegel. Any distinction between August Wilhelm and Friedrich will be made as and when it is required.

13 August Wilhelm Schlegel, *Vorlesungen über dramatische Kunst und Litteratur*, ed. Stefan Knödler, vol. 4/1 of *Kritische Ausgabe der Vorlesungen*, ed. Georg Braungart, 6 vols. (Paderborn: Schönigh 1989–2018), p. 277.

14 A.W. Schlegel, *Vorlesungen*, p. 21.

15 A.W. Schlegel, *Vorlesungen*, pp. 21f.

zur Mimik,"[16] the necessary step of combining imitation with public life was not taken everywhere. In Europe, however, this step was first taken in Greece. Schlegel's lectures contain a wealth of observations about the cultural beginnings of drama, but I shall begin by drawing on some of his telling remarks about how theatre and performance made their first passage between cultures in Europe, in the movement from Greece to Rome. His comments on Roman drama open with an acknowledgment that here we find "nur eine große Lücke," which though partly a result of a lack of historical records, is mostly down to "dem Mangel an eignem Schöpfergeist in diesem Fache."[17] According to Schlegel's account, Roman culture and society were antithetical to dramatic art. He writes: "Die Poesie war überhaupt in Rom nicht einheimisch, und wurde erst späterhin, als das ursprüngliche Rom durch Nachahmung fremder Sitten sich seiner Auflösung näherte, unter andern Veranstaltungen des Wohllebens künstlich gepflegt."[18] For Schlegel, Roman culture was so derivative that even the language is modelled on the rhythms of others. While Schlegel sees Rome as lacking an authentic artistic culture of its own, he attributes this to the fundamental spirit of Roman culture. His major premise throughout the lectures is that "[a]lle wahrhaft schöpferische Poesie kann nur aus dem inneren Leben eines Volkes und aus der Wurzel dieses Lebens, der Religion, hervorgehen"; and this is especially significant in the case of the importation of Greek drama into Rome: "Der Geist der römischen Religion war aber ursprünglich, ehe sie nach Einbuße des Gehalts die Oberfläche nach fremder Sitte ausschmückten, ein ganz andrer als der Geist der griechischen. Diese war künstlerisch bildsam, jene priesterlich unwandelbar."[19] Roman culture was the very opposite of Greek culture in Schlegel's eyes, so much so that it had an entirely different take on the role of art in society, seeing it as an imported luxury as opposed to an indigenous cultural tradition.[20] Thus it is no surprise that Schlegel finds Roman drama too rule-bidden and Roman culture incapable of producing real art – it comes as doubly no surprise then that he is done with Roman drama within half of one lecture.

But Schlegel's observations on Rome serve to set up one of the two major critical strands of his lectures. He is quick to state that while Seneca was of little

16 A.W. Schlegel, *Vorlesungen*, p. 21.
17 A.W. Schlegel, *Vorlesungen*, p. 157.
18 A.W. Schlegel, *Vorlesungen*, p. 157.
19 A.W. Schlegel, *Vorlesungen*, p. 163.
20 See, e.g., A.W. Schlegel, *Vorlesungen*, p. 22.

importance in his own right, he was a great influence on Pierre Corneille,[21] foreshadowing that the main butt of his criticism in the lectures will be France. When it comes to French neoclassicism, Schlegel manages to write off pretty much everything aside from Racine's plays as artless works dedicated to slavishly following the French interpretation of Aristotelian unities. Like Gotthold Ephraim Lessing before him, who had argued in the *Hamburgische Dramaturgie* (1767–68) that much of what the French claimed to be in Aristotle had rather been "gänzlich aus der Luft gegriffen,"[22] Schlegel states that anyone wanting to learn about Greek drama from French plays "wäre übel berathen."[23] The seeming necessity of adhering to a set of rules as an "Autorität"[24] is put down to three things. First of all, French dramatists are working under the false presumption that their plays will truly create illusion on the stage. Next to this come the dictates of decorum: courtly patronage has resulted in a set of "bloß auf Uebereinkunft gegründeter Schicklichkeiten" and the resultant works are fashioned "nach den Moden eines glänzenden Hofes."[25] Observing the unwritten rules is as important as following those that are written, even if it leads to art that, by our measure at least, would be wholly improbable. Last but by no means least, however, Schlegel holds the French in contempt for their "National- und Autor-Eitelkeit," whereby "man will es weit besser gemacht haben als die Alten."[26] This "vorlaute Klügeley," as he calls it in the second lecture, has much to answer for. In going through the French treatment of the unities in turn, Schlegel shows French neoclassical drama to be little more than a scholarly exercise of seeing how rules can be applied and opening the floodgates of criticism on those who have failed to meet the current standard. What sets Racine apart from his fellow countrymen is that he understood ancient drama for its own sake, that is, he saw it as art rather than as a set of objects to be imitated; he was the single French poet, in Schlegel's words, "welcher die Alten am besten gekannt hat, und er studirte sie nicht bloß als Gelehrter, sondern er fühlte sie als Dichter."[27]

French imitation of Greek form therefore had much in common with the Roman imitation of the same: both Roman dramatists and French neoclassicists

21 A.W. Schlegel, *Vorlesungen*, p. 166.

22 Gotthold Ephraim Lessing, *Hamburgische Dramaturgie*, in *Minna von Barnhelm. Hamburgische Dramaturgie. Werke 1767–69*, ed. Klaus Bohnen (Berlin: Deutscher Klassiker Verlag, 2010), pp. 181–694, here p. 374.

23 A.W. Schlegel, *Vorlesungen*, p. 35.

24 A.W. Schlegel, *Vorlesungen*, p. 185 and passim.

25 A.W. Schlegel, *Vorlesungen*, p. 185.

26 A.W. Schlegel, *Vorlesungen*, p. 35.

27 A.W. Schlegel, *Vorlesungen*, p. 184.

sought purely to imitate and lost the spirit of drama as poetic art in the process. Schlegel's take on French neoclassicism has at least two functions in the lectures. In the wake of the Prussian defeat at the Battles of Jena-Auerstedt in 1806, he was delivering his lectures in 1808 to a beleaguered Germanic audience of dignitaries in Vienna and pointing at a French mind-set that he (and many others) deemed to be toxic. What Schlegel says on the subject of tragedy holds for much more: "Die Franzosen haben ihr Trauerspiel nach einer strengen Idee zu bilden gesucht, sie haben aber statt dessen nur einen abstracten Begriff aufgefaßt";[28] anyone detecting more than a faint whiff of contradiction in the destruction with which the Napoleonic Code was being rolled out would certainly have drawn a number of parallels from this statement. As Roger Paulin has very recently argued, Schlegel's discussions of Rome, French courtly culture, usurpation in Shakespeare, and historical tragedy would have been clearly marked as political rallying calls against the arch-usurper and arch-philistine France.[29] More than this, however, at a time in which the Holy Roman Empire had just collapsed and Germans of various states and principalities had still never experienced nationhood, Schlegel's lectures build to an eventual cultural-political lesson about German national identity. It seems no more than fanciful to read Christopher Herold stating: "Contrary to assertions made by people who have not read [the lectures], they made no appeal to German nationalism in a political sense."[30] On the contrary, at the very end of his fifteenth lecture, Schlegel argues that the 'German' character requires a 'German' 'Romantic' drama in order to prevent Germans from disappearing "aus der Reihe der selbständigen Völker." Germans have long paid little heed to their "National-Angelegenheiten," but a national drama would help them, "ihre unzerstörbare Einheit als Deutsche fühlen zu lassen." For Schlegel, national and cultural unity can only be forged by the establishment of a national dramatic tradition. This tradition, however, can neither be the result of foreign importation nor can it rely on courtly patronage: "Lange haben sich die höheren Stände durch Vorliebe für fremde Sitten, durch Beeiferung um fremde Geistesbildung, die doch immer nur eine kümmerlich gerathne Frucht im Treibhause seyn kann, der Gesamtheit des Volkes entfremdet."[31] German national drama, that is, must avoid making the same mistakes as both Rome and France.

28 A.W. Schlegel, *Vorlesungen*, p. 216.

29 See Roger Paulin, *The Life of August Wilhelm Schlegel: Cosmopolitan of Art and Poetry* (Cambridge: Open Book Publishers, 2016), pp. 311–13.

30 Christopher J. Herold, *Mistress to An Age: A Life of Madame de Staël* (London: Hamilton, 1959), p. 356.

31 A.W. Schlegel, *Vorlesungen*, p. 440.

Instead, it must be a "Romantic" drama, meaning that it does not adhere to the classical genre distinctions of ancient tragedy and comedy; and therefore of the same form as the drama that was "einheimisch" to both the Spanish and the English. [32]

To this end, Schlegel prescribes a course of historical drama based on the examples of *Götz von Berlichingen*, *Egmont*, *Don Carlos*, and *Wilhelm Tell*. Rather than writing in imitation of the works of another culture, Schlegel's ideal German drama is one that encourages the formation of a German spirit. The plays listed, however, are all works that tend to be viewed as German dramatic responses to Shakespeare: from the formal innovation of *Götz von Berlichingen* to the blank verse of *Don Carlos*, these plays wear the influence of Shakespeare on their sleeves. Yet Schlegel finds an ingenious way of doing away with any notion that these masterworks of German literature have anything to do with foreign importation. He is happy to acknowledge the influence of Shakespeare on Lessing, but does not hold Lessing in high regard anyhow: not only does he describe *Emilia Galotti* as merely "ein Hoftrauerspiel im Conversationstone," [33] but he also takes issue with the philosophical underpinning of Lessing's entire dramatic enterprise; Lessing might have thought Denis Diderot the greatest French dramatic critic (Lessing uses these words himself, introducing a quotation from Diderot thus: "Ich will [...] den besten französischen Kunstrichter für mich sprechen lassen"), [34] yet Schlegel maintains that Diderot knew not the first thing about art, foremost because "er ihren Zweck bloß für moralisch hielt." [35] When it comes to Goethe and Schiller – two men "auf welche unsre Nation stolz ist" [36] – however, Schlegel puts their success down to indigenous genius and rigorous philosophical and historical study respectively: rather than being the recipients of foreign influence, they are "groß[e] Original-Geister." [37] In the case of *Götz von Berlichingen*, "[m]an sieht [...] nicht Nachahmung Shakspeare's, sondern die durch einen genialischen Schöpfer in einem verwandten Geiste angeregte Begeisterung." [38] In

32 See, e.g., A.W. Schlegel, *Vorlesungen*, p. 18.

33 A.W. Schlegel, *Vorlesungen*, p. 426.

34 Lessing, *Hamburgische Dramaturgie*, p. 419. Lessing's enthusiasm for Diderot endures in the Dramaturgie. In §85 of the *Hamburgische Dramaturgie*, for example, after quoting at length from Diderot's *Entretiens sur Le Fils naturel*, Lessing exclaims: "Wir wenden uns also wieder, zu sehen, was wir gelesen haben. Den klaren lautern Diderot! Aber alle diese Wahrheiten waren damals in den Wind gesagt." Lessing, *Hamburgische Dramaturgie*, p. 607.

35 A.W. Schlegel, *Vorlesungen*, p. 263.

36 A.W. Schlegel, *Vorlesungen*, p. 428.

37 A.W. Schlegel, *Vorlesungen*, p. 435.

38 A.W. Schlegel, *Vorlesungen*, p. 428.

the case of Schiller, it was only after "[h]istorische und philosophische Studien"[39] that Schiller was ready to become the great historical dramatist Schlegel holds him to be. Schlegel notes a hint of Shakespeareanism in *Wallenstein*; but this, he finds, was only a formal strategy on Schiller's part to make sure that his audiences would not be lost in the twists and turns of the complex plot.[40] Schlegel is albeit far from maintaining that everything Goethe and Schiller wrote was good: both made mistakes at an earlier point in their career, but these mistakes "sind zum Theil schon in Vergessenheit versunken oder werden es bald seyn".[41] Schiller's first three plays, that is, those that launched his literary career and gained him an international reputation – *Die Räuber, Kabale und Liebe*, and *Fiesco* – are full of misguided appropriations of Shakespearean characters and overblown emotions; in fact, both the *Wallenstein* trilogy and *Die Jungfrau von Orleans* contain quite major errors of judgement; and Schlegel cannot get on board with as much as the concept of *Die Braut von Messina*. By all accounts, in Schlegel's estimations, Schiller had written very little drama that was of any worth, but his treatment of history in *Wilhelm Tell* showed that he was at the peak of his talents shortly before he died.[42] And it is this type of historical drama that Schlegel wishes future dramatists to learn from Schiller. The future of German drama is, therefore, in the hands of historical dramatists, "die Goethe'n and Schillern nacheifern wollen"[43] – so long as they choose the right footsteps to follow, that is.

Schlegel's fifteen lectures have been devised to take their listeners through a history of European theatre showing how different forms have emerged in different cultures and nations, in response to others. Where theatre has been successful in Schlegel's eyes, that is in cases when it has been an autochthonous creation: the history of drama in Spain and in England, for example, "hat keinen Zusammenhang mit der des italiänischen und französischen, denn es hat sich ganz ohne fremde Einwirkung aus eigner Kraftfülle entwickelt."[44] Just as the Greeks imitated no one but themselves, the English and the Spanish are the only nations at present to have "ein durchaus originales, nationales, und in seiner eignen Gestalt zu einer festen Ausbildung gediehenes Theater."[45] And herein lies the lesson for Schlegel: the German stage is the youngest dramatic tradition in

39 A.W. Schlegel, *Vorlesungen*, p. 432.
40 A.W. Schlegel, *Vorlesungen*, p. 433.
41 A.W. Schlegel, *Vorlesungen*, p. 428.
42 A.W. Schlegel, *Vorlesungen*, pp. 432–34.
43 A.W. Schlegel, *Vorlesungen*, p. 439.
44 A.W. Schlegel, *Vorlesungen*, p. 279.
45 A.W. Schlegel, *Vorlesungen*, p. 280.

currency and has therefore been the recipient of "die mannigfaltigsten Einwirkungen von ihren sämtlichen Vorgängern."[46] But a Romantic drama has managed to exist in separate nations independent of developments elsewhere; and now it is time for a German tradition of Romantic drama to emerge from indigenous examples and native talent. Fortunately, as Schlegel points out, with figures such as Hans Rosenplüt (ca. 1400–1460) and Hans Sachs (1494–1576) in its history, Germans can look to a tradition that is "eben so alt als in andern Ländern."[47]

In their insistence on a native well-spring for cultural development, the *Vorlesungen* therefore have a much less "internationalist" or "transnationalist" agenda than might otherwise appear to be the case.[48] Perhaps given their intellectual and geopolitical context, however, this does not come as a surprise. As already noted, the lectures were held during the Napoleonic occupation of much of the former Holy Roman Empire and thus amidst fears that a Germanic identity would be wiped out. Beginning on 31 March 1808, Schlegel's *Vorlesungen* seamlessly segued from Fichte's *Reden an die deutsche Nation*, delivered weekly from 13 December 1807 to 20 March 1808 in an occupied Berlin. With their agenda of setting out the pre-eminence of the Germanic root of European cultures and tracing a form of educating a nation into being, Fichte's lectures may have, as Paulin suggests, "represented in many ways the antithesis of what Schlegel stood for."[49] Yet Schlegel's lectures contain distinct echoes of Fichte's *Reden*. Fichte comments on a number of occasions on the "Geist des Auslandes" that "herrscht" in many areas of German life, twisting German ways and German institutions to its will;[50] and Schlegel's observation of the French predilection for shoe-horning

46 A.W. Schlegel, *Vorlesungen*, p. 18.

47 A.W. Schlegel, *Vorlesungen*, p. 420.

48 Roger Paulin, for example, writes that Schlegel recommended Romantic historical drama to Germans "in the awareness that this form of dramatic art had evolved in the crucible of other national cultures, the English and Spanish, and hence drew on both North and South for its inspiration, while appealing to the Germanic facility for assimilation and creative adoption." Paulin, *Life of August Wilhelm Schlegel*, p. 305. As I have demonstrated above, Schlegel regards the emergence of the Romantic drama in separate nations as unrelated phenomena and therefore it is perhaps misleading to read him as pointing to an intercultural crucible and a German propensity for assimilation.

49 Paulin, *Life of August Wilhlem Schlegel*, p. 302.

50 Johann Gottlieb Fichte, *Reden an die deutsche Nation*, in *Gesamtausgabe der bayerischen Akademie der Wissenschaften*, ed. Erich Fuchs, Hans Gliwitzky, Reinhard Lauth and Peter K. Schneider, 42 vols. (Stuttgart: Frommann-Holzboog, 1962–2012), Reihe I, vol. 10, pp. 97–298, here p. 189 and passim.

tragedy into an abstract concept (quoted above) has much in common with Fichte's fears that foreign (read: French) intervention in German "Staatskunst" has provided a straitjacket for "Geist":

> Auch sie will Festigkeit, Sicherheit, und Unabhängigkeit von der Natur, und ist hierin mit dem Auslande ganz einverstanden. Nur will sie nicht, wie diese, ein festes und gewisses Ding, als das erste, durch welchen der Geist, als das zweite Glied, erst gewiß gemacht werde, sondern sie will gleich von vorn herein, und als das allererste und einige Glied, einen festen und gewissen Geist.[51]

Just as Schlegel appeals for a lack of foreign influence in what is traditionally 'German,' Fichte's own summary of what constitutes the 'German' for him is one that casts away "alle die trennenden Unterscheidungen, welche unseelige Eräugnisse [*sic*] seit Jahrhunderten in der einen Nation gemacht haben."[52] And Fichte's conviction that the "edelste Vorrecht und das heiligste Amt des Schriftstellers ist dies, seine Nation zu versammeln, und mit ihr über ihre wichtigsten Angelegenheiten zu berathschlagen,"[53] nicely chimes with Schlegel's estimation of the ideal German drama. In responding to a national crisis and offering an answer to Fichte, Schlegel's lectures call for a form of drama that is itself in crisis in the sense outlined by Peter Szondi. Schlegel writes, that

> unser historisches Schauspiel sey denn auch wirklich allgemein national, es hänge sich nicht an Lebensbegebenheiten von einzelnen Rittern und kleinen Fürsten, die auf das Ganze keinen Einfluß hatten; es sey zugleich wahrhaft historisch, aus der Tiefe der Kenntniß geschöpft. Und versetze uns ganz in die große Vorzeit.[54]

The "epische Behandlung" of what Schlegel prescribes for German culture stands in its very nature against the pure drama of the French school that he goes to such lengths to decry.[55]

I have not teased out some of the glaring contradictions in Schlegel's lectures, such as repeatedly commenting on the youth of German drama while simultaneously claiming that it has one of the oldest histories in Europe; or, indeed, as Hegel notes towards the end of his *Vorlesungen über die Ästhetik*, that the Romantics' search for original genius led them into difficulty reconciling the actual

51 Fichte, *Reden an die deutsche Nation*, p. 188.
52 Fichte, *Reden an die deutsche Nation*, p. 105.
53 Fichte, *Reden an die deutsche Nation*, p. 262.
54 A.W. Schlegel, *Vorlesungen*, pp. 439f.
55 See Peter Szondi, *Theorie des modernen Dramas* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1966), pp. 17–19.

popularity and actual impact of plays with their own precepts about what *should* be considered as responding to a nation's needs—and especially concerning Schlegel's disregard for much of Schiller's work.[56] But the preceding detailed discussion of the *Vorlesungen* gives us a sense of what Scott was working with when he wrote his "Essay on the Drama" in the latter part of 1818. On the surface, there is a good deal in common between the two works. Scott follows the same progression of different cultural forms, culminating in turning to the position of his own national tradition; and he places emphasis on the problems of French neoclassical drama. By the time Scott was working with Schlegel's text, it had already received a warm reception in Britain; this was no doubt aided by Germaine de Staël's first-hand account in *De l'Allemagne* (which had appeared in English translation in 1813), in which she writes that in his lectures Schlegel "a trouvé l'art de traiter les chefs-d'œuvre de la poésie comme des merveilles de la nature, et de les peindre avec des couleurs vives qui ne nuisent point à la fidélité du dessin."[57] Black's translator's preface then indicates the "high celebrity" won by the *Vorlesungen* on the continent by introducing Schlegel through a longer quotation from *De l'Allemagne*.[58] Not only did Schlegel's lectures receive reviews in ten of the 24 eligible periodicals at the time,[59] but these reviews were also largely positive. William Hazlitt's review of Black's translation for the *Edinburgh Review* in 1816, for instance, calls Schlegel "an absolute exception" to all that he finds forced, slow, and mechanical in German philosophy and criticism, and then only criticises Schlegel for not seeing fault in Shakespeare and for being too harsh on *Die Räuber*.[60] By the time John Gibson Lockhart's translation of Friedrich Schlegel's own Vienna lectures on the *Geschichte der alten und neuen Literatur* from 1812 were published in Edinburgh in 1818, Lockhart could rely on August Wilhelm Schlegel's reputation alone to sell the wares of his younger brother. He writes in his advertisement:

56 See Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Ästhetik* III, vol. 15 of *Werke*, eds. Eva Moldenhauer and Karl Markus Michel, 20 vols. (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1986), p. 497.

57 Germaine de Staël, *De l'Allemagne*, 2 vols. (Paris: Garnier-Flammarion, 1968), vol. 2, p. 70.

58 John Black, "Preface of the Translator," in August Wilhelm Schlegel, *A Course of Lectures on Dramatic Art and Literature*, trans. John Black, 2 vols. (Edinburgh/Dublin: Blackwood/Cumming, 1815), pp. iv–vii.

59 See Sauer, *A.W. Schlegel's Shakespeare Criticism*, p. 78.

60 William Hazlitt, review of *Lectures on Dramatic Art and Literature*, trans. Black, *The Edinburgh Review, or Critical Journal* 26, no. 51 (February 1816): 67–107.

> It is believed that none of Frederick Schlegel's writings have ever before been translated into English; but the name of his brother Augustus William Schlegel, who has been his co-adjutor in the conduct of almost all his works, is now as much respected, both in France and England, as it has long been in Germany.[61]

Scott therefore seems on fairly safe territory counting Schlegel amongst the many authorities of dramatic art that feature in his essay, such as Philip Sidney, Thomas Rymer, Dryden, Lessing, Samuel Johnson, Nathan Drake, and Coleridge.[62]

Scott directly cites Schlegel as a source four times: once on the subject of Euripides' innovations with form; once on the development of "new comedy" after Aristophanes; once on the artifice of French comedy; and lastly, criticising the deluge of *Ritterdramen* written in imitation of Goethe's *Götz von Berlichingen*, in which "there was nothing historical but the names and external circumstances."[63] Lessing, by contrast, only receives mention twice in his capacity as a dramatic theorist: once as an authority on the "curious topic" of the division of plays to whom the reader might be inclined to turn;[64] and another time as having "attacked the whole French theatrical system in his *Dramaturgie*, with the most bitter raillery."[65] These explicit references to Lessing are general and almost trivialising in a way that is not duplicated in Scott's treatment of Schlegel. Intriguingly, there are many points at which Scott's wording or idea is very close to Schlegel but makes no reference to him. His comment at the start of the "Essay" that drama moved to the Romans, "with whom it rather existed as a foreign than flourished as a native art,"[66] for example, is almost directly taken from Schlegel as translated by Black, where it reads: "The Romans could not be said to have had a poetry of their own native growth, as it was first artificially cultivated among them along with other luxuries, when the original character of Rome was nearly extinguished

61 Friedrich Schlegel, *Lectures on the History of Literature, Ancient and Modern*, trans. John Gibson Lockhart, 2 vols. (Edinburgh: Blackwood, 1818), vol. 1, n.p.

62 It is perhaps notable that Scott makes no mention of Richard Hurd, one of the most important dramatic theorists of the time, of whose work Scott would have been well aware, not least for his Letters on Chivalry and Romance of 1762. Whether Scott had read Hurd's "On the Idea of Universal Poetry" or "On the Provinces of the Drama" is uncertain, but he had certainly come across Hurd's poetological writings in Lessing's *Hamburgische Dramaturgie*, which includes a lengthy quotation from the latter in §§92f.

63 Scott, "Essay on the Drama," pp. 243, 252, 330, 385.

64 Scott, "Essay on the Drama," p. 308.

65 Scott, "Essay on the Drama," p. 384.

66 Scott, "Essay on the Drama," p. 220.

by an imitation of foreign manners."[67] Again, where Scott writes that "The orchestra, or, as we should say, the pit of the theatre, was no longer left vacant for the occasional occupation of the Chorus, but was filled with the senators, knights, and other more respectable citizens"[68] in Rome, this is not a far cry from Black's translation of Schlegel: "The chorus, for instance, had no longer a place in the orchestra, where the most distinguished spectators, the knights and senators, now sat; but it remained on the stage itself."[69] Scott's knowledge of British drama – and particularly Elizabethan and Restoration drama – was albeit detailed, yet he occasionally leans on Schlegel for his observations. Where Schlegel introduces the actor David Garrick, Black's translation reads: "Garrick's appearance forms an epoch in the history of the English theatre, as he chiefly dedicated his talents to the great characters of Shakespeare, and built his own fame on the growing admiration for this poet."[70] Scott writes:

> With the fourth era of our dramatic history commenced a return to a better taste, introduced by the celebrated David Garrick. [...] [I]f the last generation reaped many hours of high enjoyment from the performances of this great actor, the present is indebted to him for having led back the public taste to the Dramas of Shakspeare [*sic*] [...].[71]

Scott does not rely on Schlegel for the substance of his critique of French neoclassical drama. Anti-French sentiment had also been a mainstay of British theatre criticism for some time.[72] And Scott, as editor of Dryden's works, was only too well versed in Dryden's efforts "to vindicate the honour of our *English* Writers, from the censure of those who unjustly prefer the *French* before them," as Dryden puts it in his 1666 essay *Of Dramatick Poesie*;[73] Scott writes in his *Life of Dryden* that this very essay had illustrated that the French treatment of the Aristotelian

67 Schlegel, *Lectures*, trans. Black, vol. 1, p. 272.
68 Scott, "Essay on the Drama," p. 260.
69 Schlegel, *Lectures*, trans. Black, vol. 1, p. 279.
70 Schlegel, *Lectures*, trans. Black, vol. 2, p. 322.
71 Scott, "Essay on the Drama," p. 377.
72 For some discussion of the artistic and political factors standing in the way of French theatre in Britain in the eighteenth century, see, for example, Marcel Maroud, "The French Romantic Drama and its Relations with English Literature," *Rice Institute Pamphlet—Rice University Studies* 15, no. 2 (1928): 75–94; and Maximillian E. Novak, "Drama 1660–1740," in *The Cambridge History of Literary Criticism*, vol. 4: *The Eighteenth Century*, ed. H.B. Nisbet and Claude Rawson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), pp. 167–83.
73 John Dryden, "Of Dramatick Poesie, An Essay", in *The Works of John Dryden*, ed. H.T. Swedenborg Jr et al., 20 vols. (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1956–2002), vol. 17,pp. 3–81, here 7. Emphasis in the original.

unities led "to greater absurdities than those they were designed to obviate."[74] Scott is clinical in his critique of French neoclassical unities, illustrating one by one how each creates improbability and absurdity, while allegedly serving verisimilitude. He quotes twice from the preface to Johnson's 1765 edition of Shakespeare. Johnson finds the observance of the unities to be based on a false premise, arguing that the audience never takes what it sees on the stage to be real in the first place and instead spectators engage in a "conventional treaty" that time and space will be fictional and "willingly permit" of this effort of the imagination.[75] Like Schlegel, Scott attributes French rule-following to courtly culture: "The French stage arose, it must be remembered, under the protection of an absolute monarch, for whose amusement the poet laboured, and in whose presence the Drama was performed."[76] But his comments on the relationship between court and stage in France are entirely consonant with British thinking about French drama at the time. Indeed, Henry Mackenzie had observed in his "Account of German Theatre" in April 1788—the very same lecture that had awoken Scott's interest in German drama—that France's dramatic tradition, unlike that of Germany, owed its condition to having a national centre and a courtly audience.[77]

While much of Scott's take on the history of British drama has striking parallels in Schlegel's lectures, his criticism of the current status of the British stage is certainly not borrowed from Schlegel and instead consists of some long-held opinions.[78] Scott dedicates the last third of his "Essay" to discussing the history of drama in Britain. He divides it into four periods: the first runs from the days of Shakespeare and Massinger to the English Civil War, when after an initial Spanish influence, English theatre flourished; the second covers the Restoration to the Hanoverian Succession, when French courtly culture and theatre regulation took hold; the third takes in almost the entirety of the eighteenth century, when neoclassicism became firmly entrenched in Britain; and the last and fourth accounts for the present situation since the turn of the century, at which point steps must be taken to release British theatre from the stranglehold of French forms. It may

74 Walter Scott, *Life of Dryden*, vol. 1 of *Miscellaneous Prose*, p. 78.

75 Scott, "Essay on the Drama," pp. 309f. Schlegel, too, cites Johnson on precisely this point in his *Vorlesungen*, p. 196.

76 Scott, "Essay on the Drama," p. 269.

77 See Henry Mackenzie, "Account of the German Theatre," *Transactions of the Royal Society of Edinburgh* 2 (1790):154–92, here 159f.

78 See, for example, Walter Scott to Joanna Baillie, Mertoun, 31 December 1810, in *Letters*, vol. 2, pp. 418–21, here p. 421, in which Scott complains of the contemporary audience's predilection for spectacle rather than tragedy.

be tempting to suppose that Scott borrows this period-based system from Schlegel, but he had already been thinking about British drama as divided into "schools" as far back as when working on his edition of Dryden from 1805 to 1808, and therefore long before reading Schlegel.[79]

Regarding the present state of British theatre, Scott deems that it is institutional forces that are suffocating native talent. Firstly, British theatres are too large, providing the ideal venue for spectacle, so "the author is compelled to address himself to the eyes, not to the understanding or feelings of the spectators."[80] Secondly, the monopoly of two patent theatres discourages playwrights from sending their works to theatre managers, the likelihood of rejection being far too high;[81] Scott's solution here is that "increasing the number of theatres, and diminishing their size, would naturally tend to excite a competition among the managers, whose interest it is to make experiments on the public taste."[82] And last, but by no means least, he wishes to clean up the clientele of theatres. Scott's overall solution is as follows:

> If, however, it were possible so to arrange the interests concerned, that the patents of the present theatres should cover four, or even six, of smaller size, we conceive that more good actors would be found, and more good plays written; and, as a necessary consequence, that good society would attend the theatre in sufficient numbers to enforce respect to decency. The access to the stage would be rendered easy to both authors and actors; and although this might give scope to some rant, and false taste, it could not fail to call forth much excellence, that must otherwise remain latent or repressed.[83]

In effect, Scott's answer to the present impasse is to recreate the institutional conditions under which Elizabethan and Jacobean theatre had flourished up to two centuries before. In the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, the public's tastes and the sheer quantity of available performance venues, in Scott's estimation at least, "called up in profusion weeds as well as flowers [...]. But these eccentricities were atoned for by a thousand beauties, to which, fettered by the laws

79 See, for example, Walter Scott to Charles Kirkpatrick Sharpe, 1808, in *Letters*, vol. 2, p. 36.

80 Scott, "Essay on the Drama," pp. 389f.

81 This is a contention held by Scott, but his perception of the situation is exaggerated. As Greg Kucich asserts with the benefit of hindsight, for example, in the early nineteenth century, we find hundreds of playwrights at work and "an astonishing variety of classical and popular performances at the major and minor theaters entertained a diversity of social, political, and economic classes." Greg Kucich, "'A Haunted Ruin': Romantic Drama, Renaissance Tradition, and the Critical Establishment," *The Wordsworth Circle* 23, no. 2 (1992): 64–76, here 65.

82 Scott, "Essay on the Drama," p. 391.

83 Scott, "Essay on the Drama," p. 393.

of the classic Drama, the authors would hardly have aspired, or, aspiring, would hardly have attained."[84] For Scott, the playwrights, plays, and actors were there. But the institutions were not providing the right conditions under which the fruits of this talent might find their way to respectful, feeling, and discerning audiences.

In order for British playwriting to renew itself at the turn of the eighteenth into the nineteenth century, it required the example set by the "new mode of culture" – Germany – quoted at the beginning of this article. German drama was a boon to British writing because it encouraged dropping rules in favour of appealing to the sentiments of the people at large: "While the Frenchman judges of the form and shape of the play, the observance of the unities, and the *dénouement* of the plot, the German demands the powerful contrast of character and passion, – the sublime in tragedy and the grotesque in comedy."[85] But this example was also institutional: unlike in France, courts "had no share in forming the national Drama" that had only lately flourished in Germany."[86] In all, Scott appears much more willing than Schlegel to permit of intercultural exchange in improving one's own national drama. The very dramatic tradition to which Britain must look back was based on borrowing from Spain: English writers in the sixteenth century "ransacked Spanish literature"[87] to the extent that "the Drama of England commenced [...] upon the Spanish model."[88] Joanna Baillie represented the ideal native genius, "thinking and writing in solitude," whose plays such as *Count Basil*, *De Monfort* (both 1798), and *The Family Legend* (1810) had "presented to her countrymen the means of regaining the true and manly tone of national tragedy."[89] Before Baillie's intervention, however, German flowers and weeds had helped to set British theatre on a path to recovering itself from the detrimental influences of France, largely by doing away with rules and decorum and encouraging a taste for emotional sensitivity.

84 Scott, "Essay on the Drama," p. 349.

85 Scott, "Essay on the Drama," p. 383.

86 Scott, "Essay on the Drama," pp. 380f.

87 Scott, "Essay on the Drama," p. 283.

88 Scott, "Essay on the Drama," p. 332.

89 Scott, "Essay on the Drama," p. 387. This was another long-held opinion of Scott's, and one for which he was only too happy to be popular knowledge. In the introduction to the third canto of *Marmion* (1808), for example, he describes Baillie as a "bold Enchantress," whose De Monfort and Count Basil took the lead from Shakespeare to the extent that "Avon's swans" "Deemed their own Shakespeare lived again." Walter Scott, *Marmion. A Tale of Flodden Field*, ed. Ainsley McIntosh (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2018), p. 72.

2 (Trans?)-National Histories

In all, Scott has written an essay that looks much like a résumé of Schlegel's lectures. While he incorporates a good deal of knowledge that he has already accrued, to some extent, his views on ancient drama are almost entirely reliant on the insights he has gained from one whom he calls "the ingenious Schlegel";[90] and he fails to credit Schlegel where he finds views on British theatre that chime with his own. The most striking similarity between the *Vorlesungen* and the "Essay," however, is one of procedure. Coming from a tradition of *Geschichtsphilosophie* and from a tradition of speculative history respectively, both Schlegel and Scott adopt a historicist framework, pulling culture, religion, and statecraft, into their frame of reference. They tend to meet historical cultures on their own terms, using a wide range of examples from dramatic texts to illustrate how a culture is reflected in its art. Thanks to Schlegel they do so within a larger, transnational narrative in which cultural exchange both fuels and chokes creativity and the two authors use theatre history as a means for understanding a present impasse inevitably falling prey to what Herbert Butterfield denigrates as "the Whig interpretation of history," organising history into a totality featuring characters and moments at which progress was furthered or hindered.[91] Thus far, Scott's "Essay" seems therefore to be a re-writing of Schlegel's lectures for a British audience. But there is a subtle difference between the two that is telling with regard to Scott's interest in drama and his reception of German literature and thought.

In both accounts, intercultural exchange proved unfruitful under certain circumstances: firstly, the importation of Greek theatre into Rome; secondly, the insistence on following 'ancient' rules in France; and lastly, the adoption of French rule-based models in Germany in the late seventeenth and early to mid-eighteenth centuries (for Schlegel) and in Britain after the Restoration (for both). In Schlegel's account, these failures arose from intrinsic problems of intercultural cross-fertilisation. For Schlegel, dramatic art is two things: it is poetry in that it "nothwendige und ewig wahre Gedanken und Gefühle, die über das irdische Daseyn hinausgehen, in sich abspiegle und bildlich zur Anschauung bringe";[92] and at the same time, it must be theatrical by virtue of creating strong

90 Scott, "Essay on the Drama," p. 252.

91 See Herbert Butterfield, *The Whig Interpretation of History* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1973), pp. 9–31. See also: K.J.H. Berland, "Scott's Dryden: The Whig Interpretation of Literary History," *Restoration: Studies in English Literary Culture, 1660–1700* 9, no. 1 (1985): 2–8.

92 A.W. Schlegel, *Vorlesungen*, p. 25.

impressions in its audience that necessarily respond to the particular "Fähigkeiten und Neigungen der Zuhörer."[93] Dramatic works are "Hervorbringungen des meschlichen Geistes"[94] in a dual sense, being expressions from individuals at the same time as being the expression of a culture (and, as noted above, having their roots in a culture's religion). Moreover, drama is *national*: "Ferner darf und muß im Drama die Nationalität am entscheidensten hervortreten [...]. [I]m Gehalte [...] aber soll [...] Nationalität vorwalten."[95] Things went wrong in Rome, France, and in the German adoption of foreign forms previously when drama bore the scars of its importation from another culture and appeared as a luxury as opposed to something fundamental to and stemming from the national character. With the return of Charles II to England in 1660, for instance, came French influence on British mores: "Die Engländer spielten eine ihnen ganz unnatürliche Rolle, und spielten sie daher mit Ungeschick."[96] Schlegel contrasts mechanical form, in which form is forced upon subject matter (as in Rome and France) with organic form, which is "eingebohren, sie bildet von innen heraus, und erreicht ihre Bestimmtheit zugleich mit der vollständigen Entwicklung des Keimes."[97] The true work of dramatic art is truly organic: it comes from within a national culture and responds to the needs of its own national-cultural audience.

For Scott, however, things went wrong in Rome, France, and in the British adoption of French forms when the majority of the people were disenfranchised and when theatre failed to reflect nature and confront its audiences with meaningful, edifying, emotional experiences. For Scott, the neoclassical interpretation of the unities is misguided first and foremost because the effects of theatre "are produced by the powerful emotions which it excites in the minds of the spectators,"[98] while the French observance tends to stifle such responses. When Scott offers an updated understanding of how action is united in *Macbeth*, for example, he is concerned first and foremost with affect:

> It is to the character of Macbeth, to his ambition, guilt, remorse, and final punishment, that the mind attaches itself during the whole play; and thus the succession of various incidents, unconnected excepting by the relation they bear to the principal personage, far from distracting the attention of the audience, continues to sharpen and irritate curiosity till the curtain drops over the fallen tyrant. This is not, indeed, a unity of action according to the

93 A.W. Schlegel, *Vorlesungen*, p. 26.
94 A.W. Schlegel, *Vorlesungen*, p. 9.
95 A.W. Schlegel, *Vorlesungen*, pp. 23f.
96 A.W. Schlegel, *Vorlesungen*, p. 395.
97 A.W. Schlegel, *Vorlesungen*, p. 281.
98 Scott, "Essay on the Drama," p. 310.

> rule of Aristotle, or the observance of the French theatre; but, in a higher point of view, it has all the advantage which could possibly be derived from the severest adherence to the precept of Aristotle, with this additional merit, that the interest never stagnates in declamation, or is suspended by unnecessary dialogue.[99]

Shakespeare's success over French tragedians, for example, partially consists in presenting a "living variety of emotion"[100] in contrast to the artificiality of following rules. As Scott had written a decade previously, Dryden's plays made up for countless faults because they "often attained a sublime, though forced elevation of sentiment" and "served in no slight degree to interest as well as to surprise the audience."[101] Scott's account of drama in the essay is driven by affect and the relationship between verisimilitude on the stage and the emotions it evokes in the parterre. He praises Horace Walpole's *Mysterious Mother* (1768) and John Home's *Douglas* (1756) as two plays that restored "truth and passion" to tragedy and singles out the latter for producing "a passion that finds a response in every bosom";[102] and he reluctantly welcomes the "degree of sentiment" and "strain of sensibility" that German drama introduced to British playwrights and audiences alike.[103] It was courtly culture and "pedantic rules" that forbade French dramatists from "using that infinite variety of materials, which national and individual character presented to them";[104] the basic materials of natural, emotional theatre are innate to all people of all nations, but the institutions of theatre and literature – and not the character of a nation's religion – can stifle in certain conditions. Scott's understanding of the role of the theatre and the relationship between stage, playwright, and audience has much more to do with Lessing and Baillie[105] than it does with Schlegel.

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99 Scott, "Essay on the Drama," p. 300. This passage closely resembles both Goethe's description of Shakespeare's plotting and J.M.R. Lenz's discussion of how a plot may best be developed. See Johann Wolfgang Goethe, "Zum Shäkespears Tag," in *Sämtliche Werke nach Epochen seines Schaffens: Münchner Ausgabe*, ed. Karl Richter et al., 21 vols. (Munich: Hanser, 1985–99), vol. 1.2, pp. 411–14; and Jakob Michael Reinhold Lenz, "Anmerkungen übers Theater," in *Werke und Schriften*, ed. Britta Titel and Hellmut Haug, 2 vols. (Stuttgart: Goverts, 1966–67), vol. 1, pp. 344–47.

100 Scott, "Essay on the Drama," p. 319.

101 Scott, *Life of Dryden*, p. 110.

102 Scott, "Essay on the Drama," p. 378.

103 Scott, "Essay on the Drama," p. 368. For a more detailed account of Scott's reception of sentimentalism and moral function in German drama, and especially in plays by Lessing, Schiller, and August Wilhelm Iffland, see Wood, "On Form and Feeling," pp. 404–11.

104 Scott, "Essay on the Drama," p. 323.

105 Baillie lays out a comprehensive take on the role of sympathy in the theatre in the "Introductory Discourse" to the first volume of her *Plays on the Passions* in 1798. See Joanna Baillie,

If Scott's "Essay on the Drama" therefore looks like a re-writing of Schlegel's *Vorlesungen* for a British audience, that is because it more or less is. But it differs from its source text in two very major respects. Its historical account allows much more space for positive intercultural exchange in responding to a current period of domestic cultural stagnation than Schlegel is willing to permit; indeed, Scott seems to take after Richard Hurd to a degree, seeing drama as having a core principle that will appeal to everyone in all nations.[106] Given the parallels between Schlegel and Fichte and the differences in historical context between Schlegel in 1808 and Scott in 1818, these very different approaches to the use of history and historiography are no surprise: indeed, the post-war comfort enjoyed by Scott and the example of international collaborative action to bring about an end to the Napoleonic wars no doubt helped to inform Scott's perspective. Yet context cannot explain all. Friedrich Schlegel's lectures, delivered only four years after August Wilhelm's, and only shortly after the final volume of the *Vorlesungen* had been published, emanated from the same war-torn Europe in which most 'Germans' found themselves under French control. The lectures on the *Geschichte der alten und neuen Literatur* share the *Vorlesungen*'s take on a number of fronts, such as Rome's tendency purely to imitate rather than invent its own literary forms[107] and the lack of foreign influence in the development of Spanish literature from the Middle Ages into the Renaissance;[108] Friedrich Schlegel's lectures also agree with Fichte insofar as they regard the Germanic spirit as the primordial basis for European culture.[109] But Friedrich Schlegel, unlike his brother, takes an

"Introductory Discourse," in *Plays on the Passions* (1798 Edition), ed. Peter Duthie (Peterborough, ON: Broadview, 2001), pp. 67–113. See also, for example, Frederick Burwick, "Joanna Baillie, Matthew Baillie, and the pathology of the passions," in *Joanna Baillie, Romantic Dramatist*, ed. Thomas C. Crochunis (London and New York: Routledge, 2004), pp. 48–68. There are a number of striking resemblances between Baillie and Lessing with regard to the role of sympathy and pity in the theatre and how they might best be harnessed, despite Baillie's claims not to have ever engaged with or known of German theatre. The comparisons between the two would well be worth scholarly attention, but no such work has been undertaken.

106 See Richard Hurd, "On the Idea of Universal Poetry," in *The Work of Richard Hurd, D.D. Lord Bishop of Worcester*, 8 vols. (London: Cadell and Davies, 1811), vol. 2, pp. 1–26.

107 See Friedrich Schlegel, *Geschichte der alten und neuen Literatur*, ed. Hans Eichner, Abt. I, vol. 6 of *Friedrich Schlegel. Kritische Ausgabe seiner Werke* [=*KFSA*], eds., Hans Behler, Jean-Jacques Anstett, Hans Eichner, Ulrich Breuer et al., 35 vols. (Paderborn: Schöningh, 1958–), p. 65. Twelve years earlier, notably, Friedrich Schlegel was happy to permit that while poetry seemed "stets widernatürlich" to the Romans, they had managed to contribute satire to the realm of art. See Friedrich Schlegel, "Gespräch über Poesie," in *KFSA*, Abt. I, vol. 2, pp. 284–351, here p. 295f.

108 F. Schlegel, *Geschichte der alten und neuen Literatur*, p. 285.

109 F. Schlegel, *Geschichte der alten und neuen Literatur*, p. 418.

internationalist view to literary development that has more in common with Scott. He writes, for example:

> Daß die Nationen, welche später in die Weltgeschichte und in die allgemeine Entwicklung der Menschheit eingreifen, einen großen Teil ihrer Gesiteskultur von den früher gebildeten Nationen als ein Erbteil empfangen, das ist unvermeidlich; an sich also kein Vorwurf. Es wäre widersinnig, nach der Idee eines geschlossenen handelstaates, auch in der Literatur den Grundsatz einer abgeschlossenen und isolierten Nationalbildung einführen zu wollen.[110]

Scott had albeit not read Friedrich Schlegel by the time he was writing his "Essay." Instead, he brought to bear on his reading of the *Vorlesungen* an understanding of drama and performance that he then took away with himself again. In his "Essay on the Drama," Scott picks up a text by a leading light in both German and British Romanticism and re-clothes it in eighteenth-century garb. His insistence on verisimilitude and affect rather than ascribing to Schlegel's expressive understanding of dramatic art places the two figures on opposing sides of the epochal shift from the mirror to the lamp that M.H. Abrams documents in the move from mimetic to Romantic theory.[111] This latter point is of particular interest when we want to make sense of how Scott interacted with dramatic works from the German Romantic or, before that, Idealist traditions; alongside Goethe and Schiller, Scott was also to end up reading plays by Franz Grillparzer, Adolf Müllner, Zacharias Werner, and the Danish playwright Adam Oehlenschläger, taking a particular interest (much as his fellow Scots Lockhart and Robert Pierce Gillies were doing in the pages of *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* and the *Foreign Quarterly Review*) in plays that would nestle under the rubric of the *Schicksalsdrama*. Unlike Carlyle, Coleridge, and others, however, Scott was not on board with the intellectual projects and philosophical insights as such that had been and were continuing to inform developments in German drama; rather, he was drawn to how German dramatists fashioned a mirror for nature and, in so doing, engaged both readers and audiences alike to sustain an interest in the figures and circumstances populating that landscape – something that would later play a central part in the structuring of his novels. Further than this, however, faced with an ailing literary tradition in his own country, Scott sees transnational exchange as the only means of resuscitating a previous national tradition. Just as

110 F. Schlegel, *Geschichte der alten und neuen Literatur*, p. 65.

111 See M.H. Abrams, *The Mirror and the Lamp: Romantic Theory and the Critical Tradition* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1953).

Scott's output can be seen as works that foreground and explore cultural encounter,[112] Scott's own outlook on literary and dramatic historical development was one that recognised the need for looking beyond one's own borders in order to move forward.

112 See, for example, David Daiches, "Scott's Achievement as a Novelist (Part One)," *Nineteenth-Century Fiction* 6, no. 2 (1951): 81–95; David Daiches, "Scott's Achievement as a Novelist (Part Two)," *Nineteenth-Century Fiction* 6, no. 3 (1951): 153–73; and Susan Oliver, *Scott, Byron and the Poetics of Cultural Encounter* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005).